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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 003697

DEPT FOR NEA/ARN, S/CT AND INR

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SUBJECT: FORMER HIZBALLAH LEADER RESURFACES TO DENOUNCE ...  
ALMOST EVERYONE

CLASSIFIED BY: AMBASSADOR VINCENT M. BATTLE; REASONS 1.5 (B), (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: SPEAKING AT THE FUNERAL OF HIS FATHER, FORMER HIZBALLAH SECRETARY GENERAL SHAYKH SUBHI TUFAYLI DENOUNCED GOL OFFICIALS AS "MONSTERS," HIZBALLAH AS "BORDER GUARDS FOR ISRAEL," AND IRAN AS AN ALLY OF THE UNITED STATES. THIS WAS THE FIRST PUBLIC APPEARANCE IN TWO YEARS BY TUFAYLI, FOR WHOM THE GOL HAS ISSUED SEVERAL ARREST WARRANTS. HOWEVER, HE IS EXPECTED TO EXIT THE LEBANESE POLITICAL STAGE AS QUICKLY AS HE REAPPEARED LAST WEEK. END SUMMARY.

#### BACKGROUND

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¶2. (U) SHAYKH TUFAYLI, WHO SERVED FROM 1987 TO 1989 AS HIZBALLAH'S FIRST SECRETARY GENERAL, WAS STRIPPED OF HIS OFFICIAL POSITION WITHIN THE PARTY AFTER OPPOSING ITS DECISION TO TAKE PART IN THE 1992 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. AFTER BEING FURTHER DISTANCED, AND THEN EXPELLED FROM THE PARTY IN JANUARY 1998, TUFAYLI AND HIS SUPPORTERS SEIZED CONTROL OF A HIZBALLAH RELIGIOUS SCHOOL ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF BAALBEK. LAF TROOPS ATTEMPTED TO STORM THE BUILDING AND AT LEAST EIGHT PEOPLE WERE KILLED, INCLUDING AN LAF OFFICER AND A FORMER MP, SHAYKH KHODR TLEISS, TUFAYLI'S CLOSEST AIDE. SINCE THEN, SEVERAL ARREST WARRANTS HAVE BEEN ISSUED FOR TUFAYLI; HOWEVER, THERE HAVE BEEN NO SERIOUS ATTEMPTS TO ARREST HIM AND HE IS KNOWN TO CONTINUE TO RESIDE IN HIS HOME VILLAGE OF BRITAL (NEAR BAALBEK) -- VIRTUALLY A NO-GO ZONE FOR THE GOVERNMENT.

#### DENOUNCES IRAN'S ROLE IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

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¶3. (U) FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF HIS FATHER, TUFAYLI RESURFACED ON SEPTEMBER 8 TO SPEAK AT A BRITAL MOSQUE. THERE, HE LASHED OUT AT IRAN (AND THE U.S.), SAYING "THE PARTICIPATION OF IRAN'S IRAQI SUPPORTERS IN IRAQ'S INTERIM GOVERNING COUNCIL IS AN ENDORSEMENT OF AMERICAN PRESENCE THERE." TUFAYLI HELD HE U.S. RESPONSIBLE FOR THE AUGUST 31 ASSASSINATION OF MOHAMMAD BAQR AL-HAKIM, SAYING "THE ONLY BENEFICIARY OF THIS CRIME IS AMERICA." HE ADDED THAT "AMERICA'S DEFEAT IN IRAQ IS MUCH EASIER THAN ITS DEFEAT IN LEBANON." TURNING TO AFGHANISTAN, TUFAYLI SAID, "THERE ARE COUNTRIES BORDERING AFGHANISTAN WHO CLAIM THEY ARE MUSLIM NATIONS AT A TIME THEY ARE HELPING THE AMERICANS."

#### CHALLENGES HIZBALLAH AND GOL LEADERSHIP

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¶4. (U) CHALLENGING HIZBALLAH'S CURRENT LEADERSHIP, TUFAYLI CALLED FOR OPENING LEBANESE BORDERS TO DEFEND PALESTINIANS, SAYING THE PROPER DUTY OF THE "ISLAMIC RESISTANCE" IS TO FIGHT ISRAEL. TUFAYLI SAID HIZBALLAH HAS TURNED INTO A "BORDER GUARD FOR ISRAEL." TUFAYLI ALSO DENOUNCED GOL OFFICIALS, SAYING "WE DO NOT HAVE A GOVERNMENT, BUT RATHER MONSTERS," AND WARNING "EVERY THIEF TO RETURN TO THE TREASURY WHAT HE HAS STOLEN."

#### COMMENT

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¶5. (C) TUFAYLI IS A TRUE DEAD-ENDER, REPRESENTING THE MOST EXTREME, RETROGRADE STRAIN OF KHOMEINI-ISM WITHIN HIZBALLAH.

HIS UNEXPECTED, HIGH-PROFILE REAPPEARANCE CALLS INTO QUESTION THE CREDIBILITY OF THE GOL, WHICH HAS NEVER MADE ANY SERIOUS ATTEMPT TO ARREST HIM. HIS INFLAMMATORY REMARKS ABOUT HIZBALLAH AND IRAN COULD REIGNITE FRICTIONS BETWEEN THE HIZBALLAH LEADERSHIP AND TUFAYLI'S SUPPORTERS, ESPECIALLY IN THE BAALBEK-HIRMIL REGION, WHOSE SUPPORTERS THERE MAY INTERPRET TUFAYLI'S REAPPEARANCE AS A SIGN OF SYRIAN BACKING FOR HIS CAUSE. (NOTE: WE DO NOT BELIEVE THIS IS THE CASE.) PARLIAMENT SPEAKER NABIH BERRI TOLD AMBASSADOR SEPTEMBER 9 THAT, WHILE THE EVERYONE KNOWS THAT TUFAYLI LIVES IN BRITAL, THE "DEAL" HAS BEEN THAT HE WILL BE LEFT ALONE AS LONG AS HE REMAINS OUTSIDE THE POLITICAL DISCOURSE. IN THIS INSTANCE, BERRI EXPLAINED, THE SYRIANS "CLOSED THEIR EYES" BECAUSE OF THE DEATH OF TUFAYLI'S FATHER. BERRI ASSURED US THAT TUFAYLI WILL FADE BACK INTO THE WOODWORK -- AND IN FACT, MAY ALREADY HAVE DONE SO. END COMMENT.

BATTLE